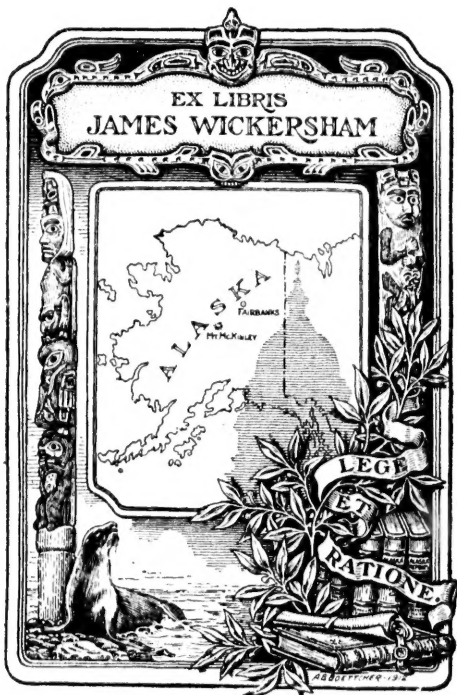


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MAJOR POWELL'S
INQUIRY:

"Whence Came the American Indians?"

AN ANSWER.

A STUDY IN COMPARATIVE ETHNOLOGY

BY

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WHENCE CAME THE AMERICAN INDIANS?

WE may assume that there is a region which was the home of the first man, or the primordial species. Where was this home; and by what route did the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent find their way from that pristine region?

Ethnology is the science of aboriginal peoples. Researches in ethnology are investigations to discover the origin or derivation of peoples. What, then, does the science of ethnology teach of the origin or derivation of the American Indian?

When the New World was discovered, a great number of tribes were found dispersed through all the habitable regions of the continent, thinly scattered in every district. The total number was comparatively small, possibly but a few millions. Nowhere in America was there found a nation, as that term is used by ethnologists—that is, a people organized into a government on a territorial basis. Everywhere the people were organized into governments as tribes and confederacies on a basis of kinship; but this kinship was often a legal fiction.

When people are organized there must be some method of grouping or regimenting them. Among the American Indians this was by kinship. Consanguineal kinship was reckoned usually in the female line. It was necessary that men who belonged to the same clan should trace their kinship through mothers: such a group of consanguineal relations is called a clan. But there were a few tribes that reckoned kinship through the male, as did the Greeks and Romans: when groups are organized in this manner they are now called gentes. A clan is a group of people who reckon consanguineal kinship through the female line: a gens is a group of people who reckon kinship through the male line. Clan organization seems to have preceded gentile organization. Most of the tribes of North America have clan organization: a few have gentile organization. One system always precludes the other. A family group, composed of two parents with their children, is again regimented with other such families into a group of consanguineal kindred as a clan or a gens. The consanguineal group is again regimented into a higher group, which we now call the tribe; that is, all

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those persons in clans or gentes who reckon kinship with one another by affinity or intermarriage constitute a higher group known as the tribe. Then tribes formed alliances, which are now known to ethnologists as confederacies. When they formed such alliances, it was under the legal fiction of kinship. They agreed to be brothers, or fathers and sons, or uncles and nephews. Thus the confederacy was founded on conventional kinship. Within these groups, others were developed, from time to time, into the nature of which we need not stop to inquire. We may now understand what the ethnologist means when he speaks about tribal society as distinct from national society. In tribal society, people are regimented by kinship: in national society, by territory.

In national society, a man belongs to the township in which he resides, takes part in its councils, and is amenable to its laws. He is also an integral member of the group of persons who have a home in the county. In the same manner, he is a member of the group of which the State is composed, he takes part in the government of the State, and is amenable to the laws of the State. Finally, he is a component member of the national group. Thus, he is a citizen in a hierarchy of groups; and his citizenship depends on the locality of his domicile. But, in tribal society, a man belongs to a hierarchy of groups by reason of his kinship, actual or conventional.

Now, all the people of America, at the date of their discovery by Europeans in the Columbian epoch, were organized into tribes; and the scanty millions, scattered over the vast region, were grouped as tribesmen. Such tribal society is quite familiar to us through the Hebrew scriptures, and has been found as a primitive condition in every part of the globe; so that the origin and history of civilization are now almost universally considered as the development of society from the datum-point of tribal organization. It began thus in Hellas; and every nationality which history investigates can, in like manner, be traced back to tribal conditions. We know it from the Hebrew scriptures as patriarchal society, in which the patriarch is the elder man of the group in the different groups by which society is regimented. In the family and in the clan or gens, the ruler or chief is usually the oldest male; in the tribe, he is often the oldest male by convention or legal fiction; while in the confederacy he is always the oldest male by legal fiction. Thus, tribal society is often said to be patriarchal society.

In recent years, another term, which is altogether misleading, has come to be used. We have seen that the clan reckons kinship through the female line, the gens through the male. A patriarchy is a govern-

ment ruled in its different units through elder males; and the term has this etymologic, as well as scientific, signification. When it was discovered that sometimes, and usually in North America, the group next above the family reckoned kinship through females, the clan, by a misuse of the term, was said to be matriarchal, or ruled by women; but the existence of such a method of government has not been found. The use of the term "matriarchal" in this manner by a few ethnologists has led many publicists to assume that the earliest stage of society is matriarchal, and that in primitive society the rulers are women. There are paternal and maternal groups; but there is no matriarchal group: the groups are all governed by men. In the Columbian epoch, most of the tribes had clan organization in the second group, but a few had gentile organization.

For a long term of years, an attempt has been made to discover the relationship between the American Indians and other peoples of the globe, hoping thereby to discover their origin. Thus, researches in the ethnology of the American tribes began with an examination of their physical characteristics as animals. This science is called somatology. It examines the relative proportions of the parts of the body, especially of the skeleton; but it also enters into minute details of everything relating to the human body, as, for example, the color of the skin, the structure of the hair, the attitude of the eyes, the conformation of the cranium, etc. Now, in these physical characteristics, such great deviations, or extreme types, as are found in the Old World are not discovered among the American Indians. For example, there is no race of dwarfs such as is found in Africa; nor has there been found a race of giants. It was long believed that the Patagonians were giants; but in fact we cannot say more than that some of them have well-developed bodies. In America, some tribes have an average stature somewhat larger than others; but the variations in the members of the same tribe are much greater than between different tribes. In the same manner there are variations in the proportions of their limbs; but no very great extremes are found from tribe to tribe, although somewhat greater extremes occur among the individuals of the same tribe. In the color of the skin there is very little variation. All the American Indians are rather dark; none of them are black; and none are white, except that now and then albinos are met with. They all have rather straight hair, that is, the cross-section of the hair varies but little; they have dark eyes (excepting now and then the peculiar eye characteristic of the albino); but the oblique eye of some of the races of the Far East has no counterpart

here. It is possible to enumerate the physical characteristics of the American Indian to an indefinite extent, and still it would be found that the extremes of type between tribes are usually much less than between individuals of the same tribe. In general, the extremes found among the peoples of the Old World are not found in America; but the average or mean of the American is about the same as that of men in the rest of the world.

On this subject there has been much research; tomes have been written, methods of examination refined, and extensive systems of anthropometric observations made; but, the more thorough the investigation, the firmer is the conclusion that the aboriginal peoples of America cannot be allied preferentially to any one branch of the human race in the Old World. The research, in its refinement, has created an art of anthropometry; but its practice has not produced a system of ethnology. The failure of somatology to solve the problem of the derivation of the North-American Indian from some other people in the Old World has led to other methods of investigation, which must now be considered.

Let us look at the state of industries among our tribes. All were skilled in the manufacture and use of stone knives, spears, and arrow-heads. All, or nearly all, of them made pottery. All of them constructed dwellings of the material most available for that purpose in their several habitats,—those of the Arctic clime making snow huts; those of the arid regions, stone houses; those of the Everglades, shell-revetted palefts, or key dwellings; and all utilizing the materials near their own homes in dwellings of a great variety of structure.

In various directions, now here, now there, the several tribes had attained to a high degree of skill in the textile arts. The extent to which the skill of the natives in the production of artifacts had advanced—with one article here and another there, so that altogether many and diverse industries were produced—is simply marvellous; especially when we consider that metallurgy was scarcely developed in the Western Hemisphere, no tools of bronze or iron being used in manufacturing.

The domiciliary structures and articles of primitive industry are greatly diversified, and often are made with great skill and ingenuity. But this grand fact stands out in high relief; viz., that everywhere the local industries were adapted to the immediate environment, and the people learned to use chiefly those things which were furnished them by nature in the several regions they inhabited. Sometimes they supplemented their stores by bartering with adjacent tribes. Every

article found has the impress of the soil; and there is no evidence that any of the industrial arts of the American Indians were borrowed from the Orient.

Artifacts are found in mounds and tombs, where they were buried with the dead: but nothing has been found which could not have been made by the tribes discovered in the Columbian epoch; and the pious offerings of antiquity tell the same story as that told by the artifacts discovered in use among the tribes by the European invader.

Stone implements and many other things are found in the latest Pleistocene deposits of valleys and plains everywhere throughout America. Nothing has been discovered which antedates the glacial epoch, and nothing, with certainty, which has been deposited antecedent to the retreat of the ice; though some few rude implements have been found for which a claim has been set up, that they date back into the latter part of the ice age of the region where found. But these conclusions are held to lack good geologic evidence of such age. The evidence on which they rest proves too much; for it often carries tool-making man back into the Cretaceous age. We may, with safety, assert that the evidence carries him back far into the river and aerial overplacement that succeeded the formations of glacial origin.

The story which these fossil artifacts tell is one of great interest; for, the older they appear, the ruder are they fashioned. From this we are forced to the conclusion that the industrial arts of the American aborigines began with the simplest tools of stone, bone, and other material here in America itself, and that their development to that high degree of excellence attained by the tribes at the time of their discovery was indigenous. The industrial arts of America were born in America. America was inhabited by tribes at the time of the beginning of industrial arts; so that if we are to find a region or a people, from which the tribes of America sprang, in the Eastern Hemisphere, we can only conclude that they left the Old World before they had learned to make stone knives, spears, and arrow-heads, or at least when they knew the art only in its crudest state. Thus, primitive man has been here ever since the invention of the stone knife and the stone hammer. How much longer, we cannot say.

With the industrial arts, decorative arts are developed. Like all primitive decoration, it is symbolic; but the symbolism used is everywhere the same. The animals of the habitat are pictured on the pottery, woven into the fabrics, and represented in the basketry. Especially are the universal symbols of the regions found. These regions or worlds

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of the primitive cosmologist are the east, west, north, south, zenith, nadir, and centre, associated with pictures of animals and other characteristics observed in the particular locality. No tribe in America has been found which does not teach a cosmology of regions, with a primitive intercourse between them in the symbols of the cross and the swastika.



The decorative pictures found scattered through every great valley of America, on the domiciles and artifacts in use by the tribesmen, and in the ruins and graves of their ancestors, show that the American Indians had not yet acquired the knowledge and skill to represent objects in linear perspective. They could not represent on a plane surface objects in position on that plane, together with objects in a position on a plane at right angles thereto; but there are found a variety of conventional methods of representing three dimensions in pictographs. A knowledge of this fact sometimes aids the archaeologist in detecting a hoax. Not many years ago, an inscribed tablet, said to have been found in a mound and to be of great antiquity, was, for this reason, immediately pronounced by an archaeologist to be spurious. Another archaeologist was not long in discovering that the petroglyph was copied from the advertisement of a brewery, with Gambrinus astride a keg!

The archaeologists of Europe find glyphs on articles among deposits which they call "paleolithic," as representing an age when only the crudest stone implements were used; but these glyphs delineate objects in perspective with a minimum of crude lines worthy of Hogarth. Found in America, they would be taken as practical jests; and the archaeologist who would accept one as a specimen of primordial art would be regarded as the victim of a hoax.

Perhaps with every tribe in America we find games of chance partially developed into games of skill. All such games have some kind of paraphernalia like dice, cards, or checkerboards. These are also found in the tombs and ruins of antiquity. They all seem to have been developed as schemes of divination; and they can be reduced to a few simple types based chiefly on the cosmology of regions. From one end of the land to the other, one common system is found. All belong to a world-wide system; and the ideas found in one region may be discovered in every other region. These games are thus the common heritage of mankind. They give no evidence of the derivation of one people from another, but only of the unity of the human race in primitive intellectual endowments.

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Let us next review the evidence existing in language. The earlier travellers were surprised to find a great number of tongues spoken by

the tribes. A few people in one district were entirely cut off from their neighbors in other districts by the barrier of language. Traders who went from tribe to tribe, or from confederacy to confederacy, found that the few words of trade language which they had mastered in one region would not serve in another. Missionaries, who sought to spread the Christian religion, found it a hopeless task to promulgate their doctrines as itinerant evangelists, and were forced to establish themselves in districts by tribes, devoting themselves to a study of the languages individually. Every language seemed to have difficult vocables, with unpronounceable elements, and a grammatical structure that revelled in distinctions to which civilized men were unaccustomed in ordinary European speech. Some of the latter, however, occur in the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Latin. Thus, they found the declensions and conjugations of the three languages of historical learning pretty well developed, though variously modified; but, in addition, they discovered a set of grammatical distinctions which made those languages difficult of acquirement to them, though simple to those brought up in the use of such grammatical forms. Thus, distinctions were made between elder and younger brothers, elder and younger sisters, between uncles and aunts in the female and those in the male line, between cousins in the male line and cousins in the female line; and these were again distinguished as elder and younger. When things were to be counted, they had to learn a different set of numerals for different classes of things. Long objects were counted with one set of numerals, short objects with another, standing objects with a third, and recumbent objects with a fourth. Many such distinctions were observed, in addition to those of gender, number, case, tense, mood, and voice, with which, as scholars, they were familiar.

Among a people not exceeding in number those of a small European nation, but widely scattered throughout North and South America, and regimented in bodies of kindred, a vast system of distinct languages was found, usually so unlike each other that they did not furnish a method of intercommunication between different peoples. Of such languages some hundreds are well known: perhaps there were thousands. Every year's investigation multiplies the number; and any one such language, when carefully studied, is found to be composed of a number of languages,—sometimes of those known elsewhere, often of languages otherwise unknown.

The multitude of tongues thus found is thrown into groups; each group representing a number of languages having common elements in

part. Thus we have a group of Algonquian languages, of which there are about forty, no one of which could be understood by a people speaking another, and differing greatly in the extent of non-common words. Such a group is called a stock. In the same manner, the Athapascan stock has from thirty to forty languages; the Siouan stock twenty or more; the Shoshonean stock a greater number; while there are stocks which are represented by a single language, like that spoken at Zuñi, or by the Kiowa.

The Eskimauan language, which is spoken at the extreme north of this hemisphere, is also found in the north of Asia. The people have been called Orarians, that is, "dwellers on the shore." They inhabit a narrow strip of country around the margin of Greenland, and to the west of Baffin Bay, around all the great islands and down the coast to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, on the western shore of Hudson Bay, and about the bays and straits to the north; then to the west around Alaska, and still farther along the Arctic shores of the eastern continent. They thus extend along the winding island and mainland coast for more than ten thousand miles; inhabiting a narrow fringe of country by the sea, and obtaining their livelihood therefrom. More than ten thousand miles of coastland are occupied by a people who speak one language.

But in Newfoundland there are tribes which speak another tongue mixed with the Eskimauan; while on the southwest coast there are other tribes speaking mixed tongues; and the same is true of tribes inhabiting the northern coast of Asia. If we call all these tongues Eskimauan, then the principal tongue is still homogeneous, and a common medium for the communication of tribes occupying, as I have said, more than ten thousand miles of the most difficult coast known to mankind. While there is intercommunication, it is infrequent because of the difficulties and perils of Arctic navigation. Thus, in all that stretch of country there is but one language. What are the conditions under which this language has been preserved in its integrity and homogeneity? Simply these: The territory occupied by the peoples speaking this language is cut off from the interior by an uninhabitable belt of glacial land, so that the means of communication are to be found mainly on the seaward side. The inhabitants, having been distributed over this enormous belt of coast from a primitive tribe having one language, have preserved that language through all their vicissitudes and stages of culture; while in the southeast, where the Eskimauan territory joins territory occupied by tribes having other tongues, we find mixed languages. The same facts appear on the southern coast of Alaska, in

languages differentiated from the main stock by admixture with other languages. With the exception pointed out, the Eskimauan language is the purest language known on this hemisphere. So far as they have been studied, all other languages are compounded of at least two, and usually of many.

From these examples we learn this important fact with respect to language; viz., that the differentiation of two or more languages from the same stock, by reason of the separation of the people into tribes and their reorganization into the nation, plays but a minor part, indeed a very minor part, in the multiplication of languages; that the chief factor in differentiation is the compounding of different primordial tongues.

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A new language may be formed by the admixture of two or more distinct tongues; the distinct tongues being wholly absorbed, or they may remain as distinct languages spoken by branches of peoples not amalgamated. New tongues are developed by compounding and re-compounding; and this process of compounding has proceeded in all time as it has during the historic period. We know how languages have developed in this manner during the last two thousand years; their origin by compounding is attested by all history; and there is not known throughout the wide earth a single instance where, by the division of the people into nations, a language has differentiated into two or more dialects without the admixture of elements from some other tongue. We are therefore compelled to regard the evolution of language as a process of integration by compounding, and, consequently, to think of a vast multitude of primordial languages. Every little tribe produced a language of its own; for we no longer look at language as something of divine origin, but understand it to be a conventional body of words devised by men in their efforts to communicate ideas, and having a beginning in simple tribal speech only a little superior to that of some of the lower animals.

Every language which is studied is traced to lower and still lower stages of structure; and when we speak of a stock or family of languages, we mean a group that is conventionally related through the compounding of common elements.

As we cannot reduce the languages of the Eastern Hemisphere to one common primordial tongue, so we cannot trace the languages of the Western Hemisphere to one common body of speech; nor can we discover any primitive or fundamental relationship between any one language of the West with any one language of the East. We are

therefore forced to conclude, from the evidence of language, that the tribes inhabited this hemisphere anterior to the development of articulate or grammatic speech,—that is, before words were so crystallized by phonetic development that they might enter into the compounds necessary to the evolution of a body of speech, and etymological research should be able to abstract its roots and compare them with the fundamental elements of Eastern tongues. As in historic times languages have developed their vocabularies by compounding and adding foreign elements, and in the process have sloughed off cumbersome grammatic forms and replaced them by logical forms as parts of speech, so we must conclude that the same process was at work in prehistoric times.

A vast amount of investigation has been expended in a search for some primeval language as the foundation of the language of the Aryan or Indo-European peoples. But, the longer the investigation continues, the more hopeless the problem; for the greater is the number of the primitive languages found to be. Not one language became the Aryan languages; but the latter were derived from innumerable primordial tongues. There was no single primordial American tongue; but, when languages were formed, there were as many bodies of speech as there were tribes of men.

Let us now turn to contemplate the opinions of mankind. The history of opinions is the science of sophiology. Ethnologists have long been in search of these opinions as expressed in the cosmology and mythologies of the American Indian. We now know that all our tribes were primitively zoötheistic; that is, they worshipped beast gods, which beast gods were the primordial animals,—the progenitors and prototypes of existing animals. The gods of each tribe were the particular animals of the habitat of that tribe. True, they all worshipped the heavenly bodies; but they supposed them to be the primitive animals transported to the zenith world. They also worshipped certain animals of the nadir world,—the underground beasts. Thus they assigned the birds to the heaven; the badgers, moles, and other burrowing animals to the nadir; and the other animals to the four cardinal regions. Their progenitors or prototypes are still believed to inhabit these distant regions, and such birds and beasts as are now found here to have come from these regions as their primitive homes.

Thus, all the American Indians have a cosmology of regions and a theology of animal gods; but the tribes differ from district to district in the personages of their pantheon. The gods are always organized

as a tribe; but the chief of the tribe is now this, now that, mythic personage. Among the Ute it is *Shinawav*; and among the Zuni it is the sun. Among those tribes that have made the greatest progress in culture, there seems to be a tendency to exalt celestial personages, and to adopt a philosophy which singularly resembles that of our Aryan forefathers. We are able to discover vestiges of ancient zoötheistic belief among the tribes of the Orient; and we are also able to discover vestiges of a regional cosmology in many places throughout the Eastern Hemisphere. So, we are justly entitled to believe that the cosmology and theology of the American Indian were at one time universal; but we are not able to trace any direct connection between the Orient and the Occident in the cults of primitive peoples.

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We are therefore abundantly warranted in saying that the American Indian did not derive his forms of government, his industrial and decorative arts, his languages, or his mythological opinions from the Old World, but developed them in the New. Man thus seems to have inhabited the New World through all the lost centuries of prehistoric time. In fact, we are compelled to believe that man occupied the entire habitable globe anterior to the development of arts, industries, institutions, languages, and cosmological opinions. That this aboriginal man was spread abroad from some primitive habitat may be true; but there is no evidence that the dispersion of mankind was subsequent to the development of distinctly human activities as represented by arts, industries, governments, languages, and philosophies, although he had already acquired a supremacy over the lower animals which made him the universal species.

How this primordial species, the ante-human species, was distributed from some geographic centre or region, is the problem which remains for solution; and this cannot be solved by ethnology as represented in physical races or as exhibited in cultural characteristics. If it shall ever be solved it will be done only by geologic research,—by discovering the remains of the man-animal in his primordial condition as they are buried in some geologic stratum, and by following them from land to land in geologic formations.

Ethnology has traced the problem outside its domain and found it to be a geological problem. Ethnologists have traced mankind back into a geological period,—the glacial,—back to a time when the geological distribution of land areas was quite different from that which now obtains. As it is a geological problem, it can be solved only by geologists and biologists.

Let us now review the statements made, in order that we may the more thoroughly realize the nature of the argument and the conclusions derived therefrom. We have reviewed in a summary manner the somatologic elements, or those which depend upon the physical characteristics of men, and have found that we cannot derive American tribes from any other tribe or group of tribes in the Eastern World. Then we have briefly set forth the evidence furnished by the five classes of demotic facts; namely, arts, industries, institutions, languages, and philosophies. In the five categories of demotic characteristics, we discover that there are certain features which are universal to mankind, and certain other features which are of local origin: these must now be briefly reviewed.

In the case of the æsthetic arts or arts of decoration, arts of physical amusement or sports, and arts of intellectual amusement or games, we find them all founded on ideas universally entertained by tribal men throughout the globe, but that, at the same time, their embodiment in objective material is controlled by tribal habitat. Thus, in decorative art, the pictures produced represent the material objects, such as animals, geographic features, and phenomena of the heavenly bodies, which are to be observed in the particular locality inhabited by each tribe. The games are those which spring out of the surplus of human activity everywhere among mankind; but they have a special environment, represented in the objective materials of the locality. All games start from the universal effort of mankind to divine the future, but find their expression in objective materials pertaining to the locality where they are exploited. In considering all these arts, we are led to the conclusion that they are not derivative from abroad, but are developed by local environment.

The same is true of the industrial arts. Houses are made of ice where there is perpetual ice; of mats of tules, rushes, grass, and leaves where such materials are abundant; and of slabs, small trees, boughs, and bark where such materials are the most convenient. They are made of slabs of stone in arid and cliff regions where flat stones are abundant; the cliffs themselves are utilized where cliffs prevail; and, finally, in the Everglade regions, house-sites are selected and these sites developed and improved by pale^{ft} structures and shell embankments.

In institutions, we discover that regimentation is founded on the universal idea of kinship, and that the regulation accompanying regimentation is founded on the universal idea of superior age, while the details of regulation relate to the activity which the locality demands.

In languages, we find that they start with the universal effort of mankind for expression, and that the objects expressed are in part universal to mankind. All languages have pronouns, all languages have numerals, all languages have words for universal concepts, such as father, mother, son, and daughter; but, in addition to these universal concept terms, there are other terms which express the facts of the local environment.

Finally, in philosophies, certain universal concepts, as of regions, heavenly bodies, fire, etc., are woven into myths, the actors in which are the animals of the locality.

To a limited extent, arts have travelled from tribe to tribe by acculturation. Industries have, in like manner, travelled from tribe to tribe; for one tribe has borrowed from another the ideas which are expressed as object-lessons. Tribes have come in contact with tribes; they have made wars on one another, and often established peace and regulated intercommunication. They have thus borrowed legal principles from one another, and entered into mutual agreements on the nature of these principles. The individuals of tribes have conversed with one another by gesture speech, and, finally, by oral speech; and thus languages have been compounded. Tribes that have commingled with one another have interchanged the elements of their philosophies; and thus myths have spread. Such is the state of demotic characteristics discovered in the Columbian period; but there is no evidence that the tribes of the Occident have ever commingled with the tribes of the Orient. Thus we are forced to conclude that the occupancy of America by mankind was anterior to the development of arts, industries, institutions, languages, and opinions; that the primordial occupancy of the continent antedates present geographical conditions, and points to a remote time, which can be discovered only by geological and biological investigation.

In the demotic characteristics of the American Indians, all that is common to tribes of the Orient is universal, all that distinguishes one group of tribes from another in America distinguishes them from all the other tribes of the world.

Mankind was dispersed over the habitable earth anterior to the development of demotic characteristics.

JOHN W. POWELL.

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